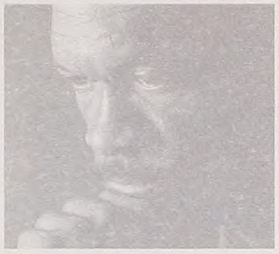
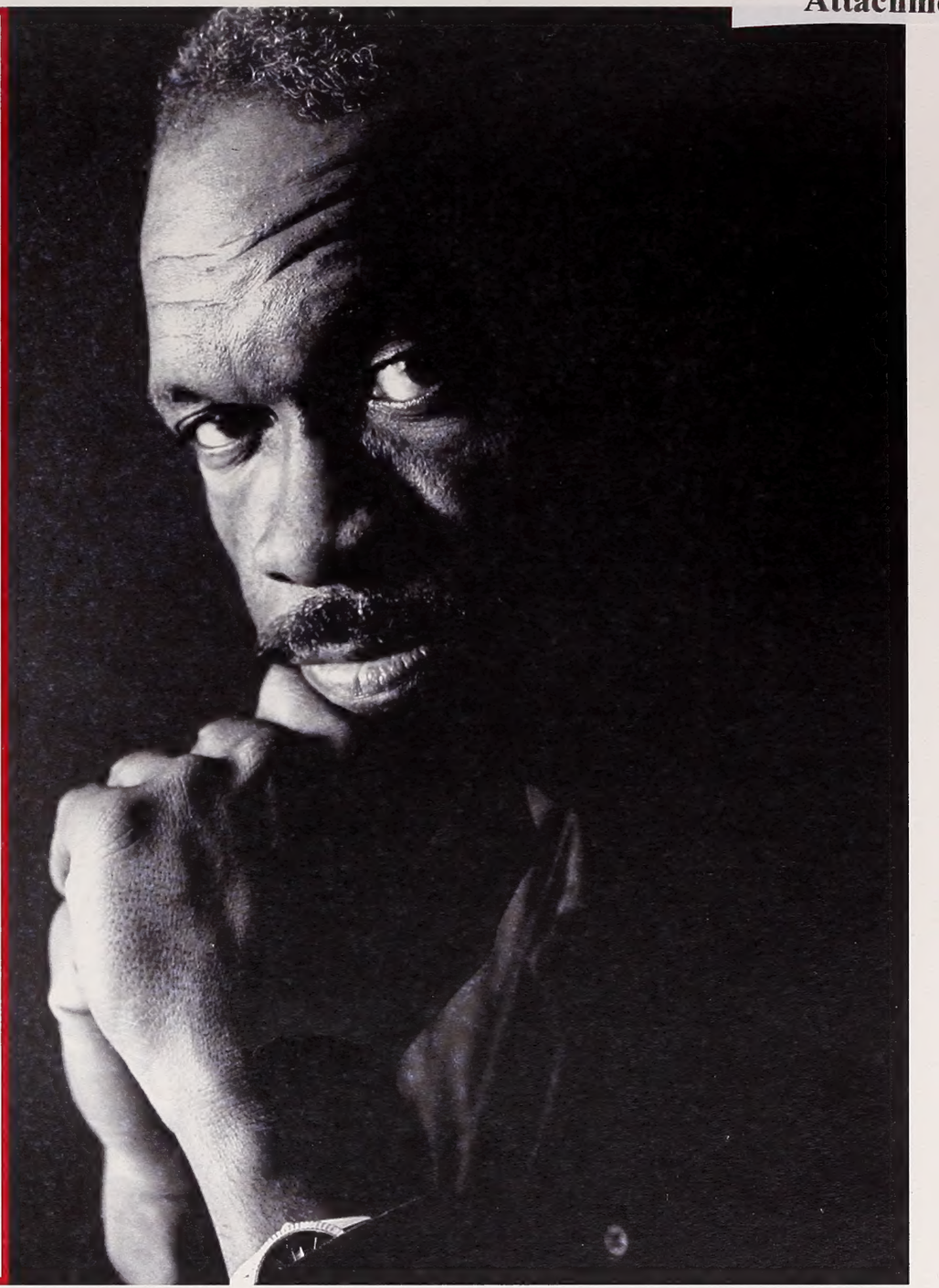
Real Men
Checkin' It Out

South Carolina Department of
Health and Environmental Control
Office of Minority Health



Prostate Cancer Health Communication and
Education Initiative for African American Males
in South Carolina



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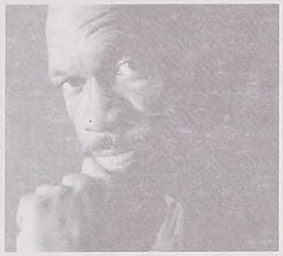

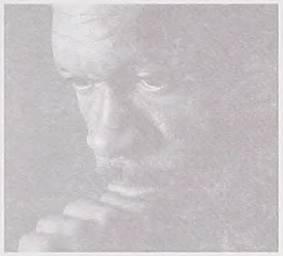

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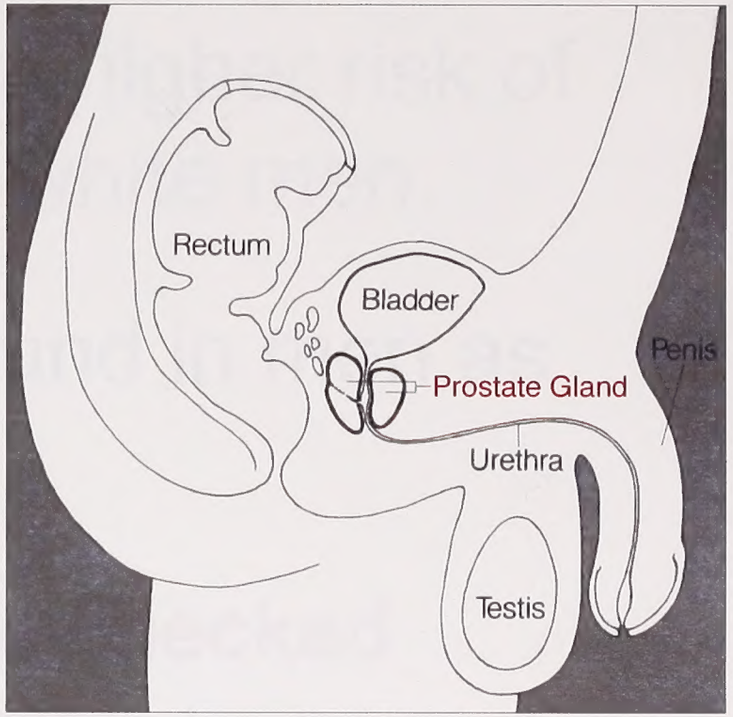
What is the prostate gland?

- The prostate gland is a male sex gland.
- It makes a thick fluid that forms part of the semen, the white fluid that contains sperm.

Where is the prostate gland?

- The prostate is about the size of a walnut.
- It is located below the bladder and in front of the rectum.
- It goes around part of the urethra, the tube that carries urine or pee from the urinary bladder to the outside of the body.



Who usually gets prostate cancer?

- All men are at risk.
- African American men have a higher risk of getting prostate cancer than white men.
- Prostate cancer has been found in men as young as their thirties.

Start having your prostate checked before trouble starts!

What does being at risk mean?

- A risk is anything that increases your chance of developing a disease.

What is prostate cancer?

- Cancer is caused when cells in your body become abnormal. They grow too fast and without any order.
- Prostate cancer happens when this abnormal growth is in the prostate gland.

How are prostate problems or cancer found?

- Prostate cancer problems can be found during what is called a *screening.*
- Ask your doctor about prostate cancer screenings.
- Check out your local paper, radio or television station for free or low cost screenings in your area.

How will I know if I have prostate cancer?

You can't make the diagnosis yourself!

- Your doctor can perform certain tests to see if you have cancer or some other minor problem such as enlargement of the prostate gland, which can also be treated.
- There are certain signs and symptoms that may let you know that there is a problem.
- Tests are needed even if you do not have any of the signs and symptoms.

What are the signs and symptoms?

- When symptoms do occur, they may include:
  - frequent urination or peeing, especially at night
  - inability to urinate
  - trouble starting or holding back urine or pee
  - a weak or interrupted urine flow
  - blood or pus in urine or semen
  - frequent pain or stiffness in the lower back, hips or upper thighs

If you have any of these problems, SEE A DOCTOR!

If I have these problems does that mean I have cancer?

- Any of these symptoms may be caused by cancer or by other problems that can be less serious.
- A man who has symptoms like these should make an appointment with a doctor.
- **Only a doctor can tell you if the symptoms are caused by prostate cancer or something else.**

What does all this really mean to me?

- More men die from prostate cancer in South Carolina than in any other state in the United States.
- African American men are more at risk for this disease.
- In South Carolina, African American men are three times more likely to die from prostate cancer than white men.

In South Carolina about **3,100** new cases of prostate cancer will be diagnosed in 2002!

Of that, about **500** will die!

Prostate cancer ***can*** be treated and cured if found early!

What puts me at risk for developing prostate cancer?

- Some of the risk factors for prostate cancer are:
  - **Age**: Rarely seen in men younger than 50 years old. The chance for developing prostate cancer increases with age.
  - **Race**: Black males are more likely to develop and die of prostate cancer than white males.

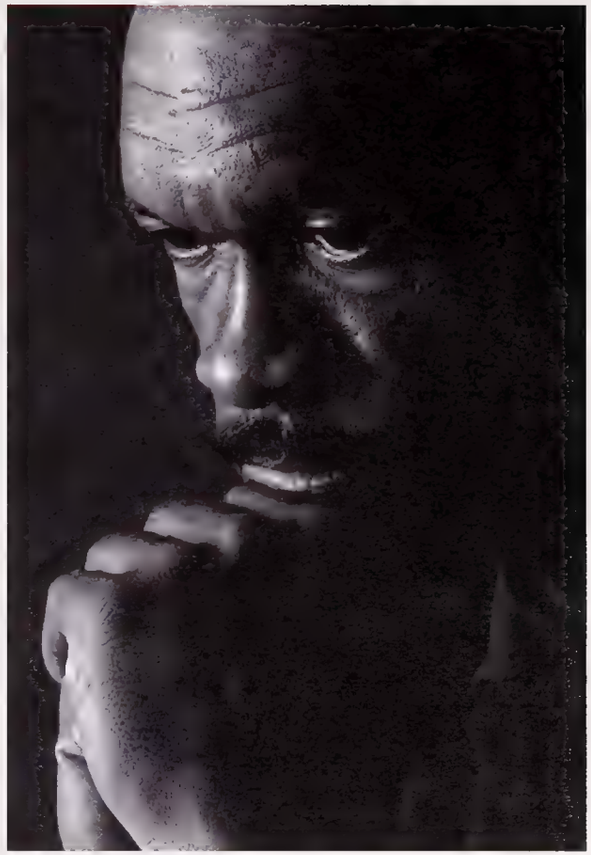
– **Family history** of prostate cancer: A man whose father, brother, or son has had prostate cancer has a greater chance of developing prostate cancer.

- **KNOW YOUR FAMILY HEALTH HISTORY!**

- Other risks include drinking alcohol and eating foods high in fat.

How can I find out if I have prostate cancer?

- The only way to find out is by getting checked by a doctor.
- Your doctor or health care provider can tell you what tests you will need.



Don't wait until you are having problems.

By then, it may be too late!

What will happen when I go to the doctor?

- The doctor will...
  - ask you about your complete medical history;
  - do a physical; and
  - order lab tests.

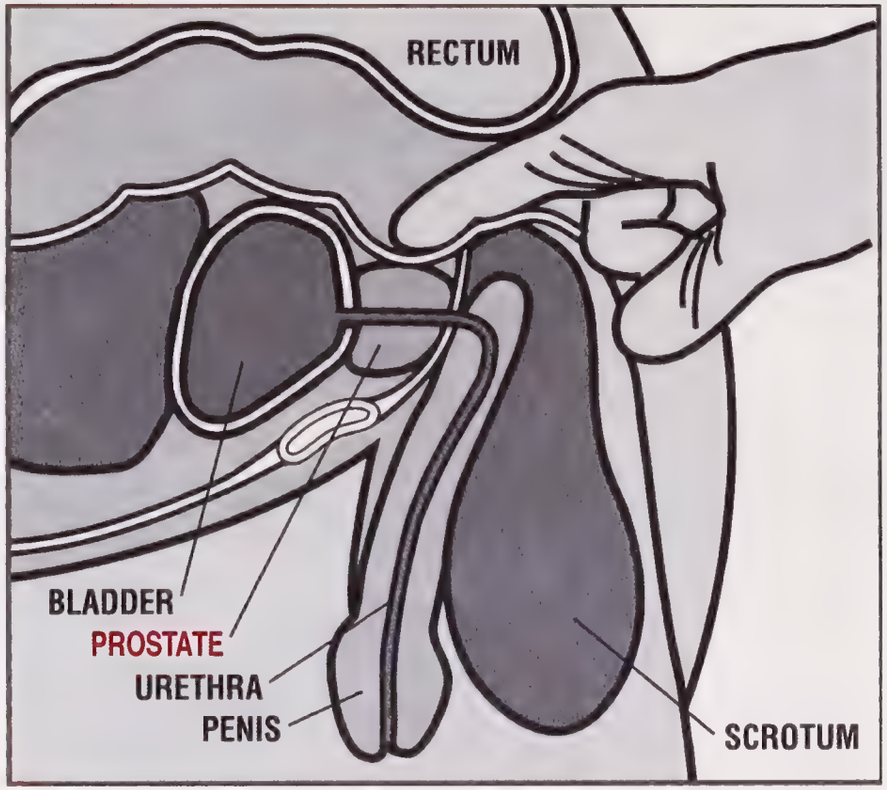
- The doctor may also
  - do a **Digital Rectal Exam** or **DRE** and
  - take blood to measure substances called **Prostate-Specific Antigen** or **PSA.**

Tell me about the PSA

- The **PSA** is a blood test.
- The doctor will use the results from this test to see if there is a need to check for further signs of cancer.

Tell me about the DRE

- A digital rectal exam or **DRE** is an important part of your examination.
- The doctor inserts a gloved, lubricated finger into the rectum to feel the prostate for any hard or lumpy areas.



The DRE takes only a minute.

Most men say that it really doesn't hurt!

What should I ask my doctor after the tests are done?

- It is important to talk to your doctor and ask questions.
  - **Ask** the doctor…
    - when will the tests come back?
    - if cancer is found, what should I do next?
    - what will the treatment be?

Do I have to wait until I have problems to get checked?

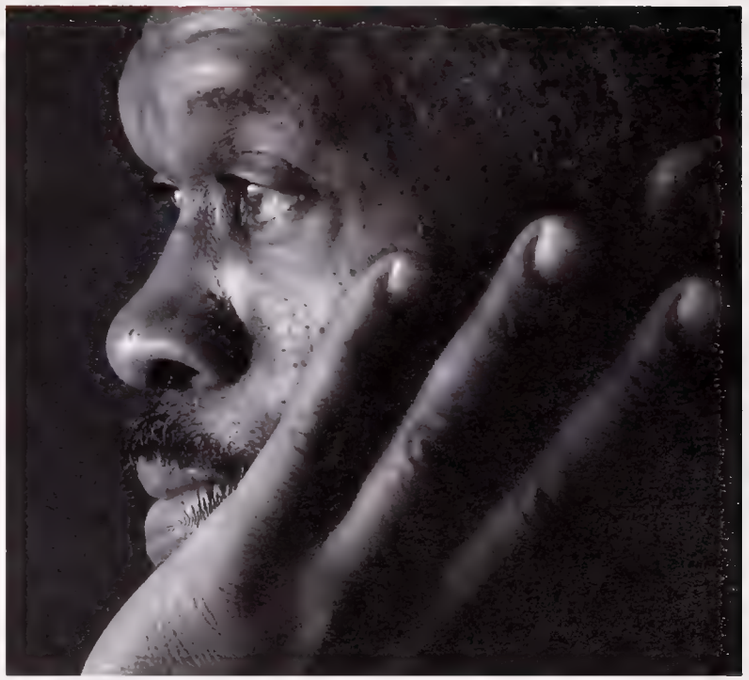
NO! Finding Out Early Saves Lives!

- Yearly prostate exams should begin at age 40.
- Tests should be offered to African American males, and to younger men who are at high risk.

Talk with a doctor, who will help you understand what is best for you.

What should I do if the doctor finds cancer?

- Your doctor will develop a treatment plan with you.

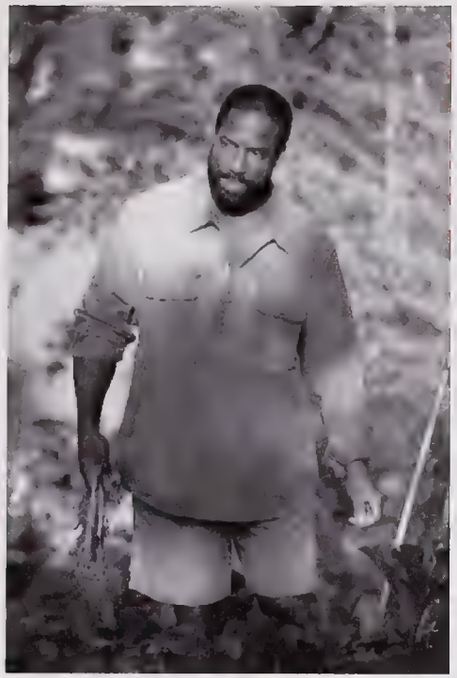


If you are diagnosed with cancer...

- It is important to learn all you can about the disease, your treatment choices, and possible side effects.
  - *Ask your doctor or health care provider for information*

    or
  - *call the American Cancer Society (ACS) 1-800-227-2345 or (803) 750-1693 in South Carolina.*

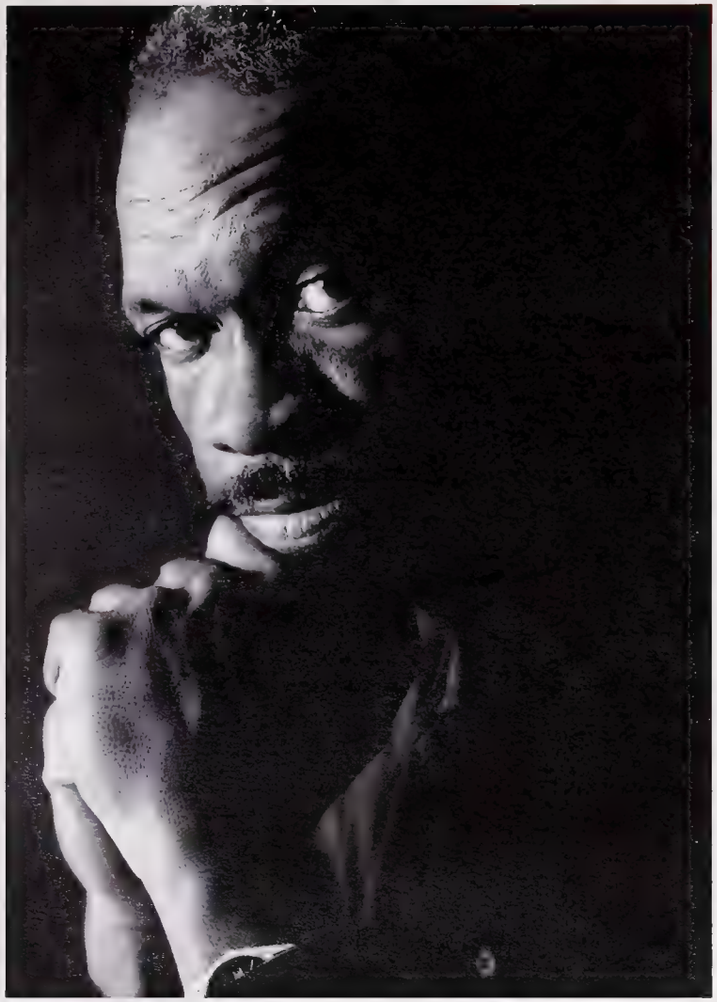
You **can** take an active part in decisions about your medical care.



Real men tell real stories

"What would I tell men about prostate cancer?
When it started with me, I would go to the bathroom and it would hurt. At first it hurt just a little bit, then it got worse. My friend told me to go to the doctor. I said I would, but I didn't. I hated doctors. I finally went to the hospital for alcohol problems. One of the doctors wanted to take water from me. I was urinating, but I had to hold onto the commode. When I finished I was on my knees. He told me he wanted me to see another doctor. When I gave that doctor a urine sample, about half of a cup of blood came out of me. I found out later that cancer had spread and got my bladder, too.
You got to go to the doctor."

–53-year-old survivor



"My message for men is this: *Forget the macho.* Go and have yourself checked. Of course they [doctors] say you should start having it after a certain age, but my thing is no age is too young. You need to get rid of the fear. It ain't going to kill you and it might save your life. *Real men get it checked.*"
–61-year-old survivor

"Why did I start getting checked? *I didn't think about prostate health until I became sick.* That was around 1986. My mother said she never really heard anything about prostate cancer until my father was diagnosed. When my father was diagnosed, it was too late. *I started having problems when I was 36. I was the youngest person my doctor had ever operated on for prostate cancer."*

—49-year-old survivor

"I have run into younger men who tell me, 'Man, I am not going to run the risk of the possible side effects of that operation.' They value their masculinity, which is to them sex. It is a sad comment when you say that you would rather die than to jeopardize sex."

—58-year-old survivor

Why women care

- There are at least four good reasons!
  - Prostate cancer affects husbands, brothers, fathers, lovers, sons, uncles and grandfathers.
  - If found early, it is curable for most patients.

- If women don't encourage men to go for check-ups, and the cancer is found late, it can lead to death.
- Women can make a difference in getting men in for screening.

Women Speak

"We need to let our men know how important they are.
As far as women are concerned we need to let them know how important it is for us to keep them around. *We need to let them know that they are getting checked for the both of us."*

–Female - Fairfield County

"We want our men alive.
You can learn other things.
We should encourage our men to go to the doctor every year to get the test."

—Female - Richland County

Remember….

- Prostate cancer is a serious disease.
- Know the signs and symptoms.
- You are at a higher risk if you are African American and/or members of your family have had prostate cancer.

- **You can't make the diagnosis yourself!**
- Ask your doctor about the DRE and PSA.
- Prostate cancer can be treated and cured if found early.

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If you would like to reprint or adopt this material, please contact
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